

With the accession of Saudi Arabia in December 2005, the WTO now has 149 members.

Canada is active in the accession negotiations of all applicants. To date, the following 30 applicants are at various stages of the accession process: Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belarus, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Russia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Serbia, Seychelles, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tonga, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vietnam and Yemen. Canada has completed bilateral market access negotiations with Russia, Ukraine and Vietnam.

Accession negotiations take place on two tracks, multilateral and bilateral. During multilateral negotiations, a working party of interested WTO members examines the acceding country's economic and trade regime to identify the changes required to bring its laws and administrative practices into conformity with WTO agreements. In parallel with working party meetings, WTO members hold bilateral market access negotiations on goods and services with the acceding country.

By participating in working party deliberations, Canada helps ensure that accession will bring about transparent, predictable and rules-based trading practices in the acceding country's market. In bilateral market access

negotiations, Canada's objective is to reduce or eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers to provide better access for goods and services that are of current or future export interest to Canadian firms.

Of the 30 applicants currently awaiting accession to the WTO, nine are least developed countries (LDCs): Bhutan, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Laos, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Sudan, Vanuatu and Yemen. Canada is working actively with other WTO members to facilitate the accession of LDCs, recognizing that WTO accession will help LDCs in their development efforts and transition to fully participating members of the world trading system. Canada endorses the guidelines for facilitating and accelerating negotiations with acceding LDCs, approved by the WTO General Council in December 2002.

Canadian negotiating positions for accessions are developed by federal government departments in consultation with provincial and territorial governments and the private sector. Accession negotiations offer an important opportunity to resolve Canadian market access problems in the applicants' markets.

Further information on the WTO accession process can be obtained at http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/acc_e.htm.